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DEATH OF ELIJAH P. LOVEJOY. A VOICE FROM THE PAST.

**MAYOR KRUM'S OFFICIAL REPORT OF THE LOVEJOY TRAGEDY
SEVENTY-FOUR YEARS AGO—A DOCUMENT BUT LITTLE
KNOWN—FOUND IN AN OLD NEWSPAPER OF
NOVEMBER 9, 1837.**

The following statement from John M. Krum, mayor of Alton in 1837, in regard to the pro-slavery riot of Nov. 7, seventy-four years ago, appeared in the Alton Spectator of Nov. 9. It has never been re-published in any volume printed on that subject, and we give it place today as a valuable official report of the tragedy. The paper which contains it is owned by Mr. B. S. Sawyer, whose father was editor of the Spectator at one time, but who had severed his connection with the paper a month previous to the riot.

TO THE PUBLIC.

Mayor's Office, City of Alton,
Nov. 9th, 1837.

In order that the public mind may be correctly informed as to the lamentable and fatal tragedy that was enacted in our city on the night of the 7th inst., and with a view of preventing and correcting distorted statements of the proceedings of the mob and those persons against whom the attack was directed, I deem it incumbent on me, and proper, that I should present in my official capacity, a plain statement of all the facts connected with the unhappy excitement that has so long agitated the peace and tranquility of the citizens of Alton. Without referring to causes or results of previous excitements with refer-

ence to the Alton Observer, I shall confine myself to the last and most melancholy occurrence that has befallen our city.

For several days past it had been announced and generally believed that a printing press was hourly expected to be landed at our wharf. It had also been the current rumor that this press was intended for the re-establishment of the Alton Observer. The circulation of these reports caused no small degree of excitement among those who have taken a decided stand against the abolition sentiments that were understood to have been disseminated by the Observer. Various reports of a threatening character were in circulation against the landing of the press, which led the friends of the paper and its editor, to make preparations to defend the press, in case any violence should be offered by those opposed to the publication of the paper. On Tuesday, about 3 o'clock in the morning, I was called from my lodgings and informed that the press had arrived at the wharf, and that my official interference was desired. I immediately repaired to the wharf and remained there until the press was stored in the warehouse of Godfrey, Gilman & Co. There were no indications of violence or resistance at that time. The arrival of the Abolition press, as it was generally termed, was known in the early part of the day and served to rekindle the excitement. Representation was made to the Common Council of the threatening reports in circulation. The Council, however, did not deem it necessary to take any action on the subject. Gentlemen directly interested in protecting the press from mob violence, deemed it expedient to guard the warehouse with men and arms, in readiness to resist violence should any be offered. During the early part of the night of Tuesday it was reported that 30 or 40 men were on guard within the warehouse.

About 10 o'clock at night some 20 or 30 men appeared at the south end of the warehouse and made some indica-

tions of an attack. Mr. W. S. Gilman, from the third story of the warehouse, addressed those without and urged them to desist, and at the same time informed them that the persons within the warehouse were prepared and should endeavor to protect their property, and that serious consequences might ensue. Those without demanded the press and said they would not be satisfied until it was destroyed; said they did not wish to injure any person or other property, but insisted on having the press. To which Mr. Gilman responded that the press could not be given up. The persons on the outside then repaired to the north end of the building and began throwing stones, etc., and continued their violence for from fifteen to twenty minutes, when a gun was fired from one of the windows of the warehouse and a man named Lyman Bishop was mortally wounded. He was carried to a surgeon's office and the mob withdrew and dispersed, with the exception of a small number. Upon the first indication of disturbance, I called upon the civil authorities most convenient and repaired with all dispatch to the scene of action. By this time the firing from the warehouse and the death of one of their number (Bishop had died soon after receiving the shot), had greatly increased the excitement and added to the numbers of the mob. Owing to the late hour of the night but few citizens were present at the onset except those engaged in the contest. Consequently the civil authorities could do little towards dispersing the mob except by persuasion. A large number of persons soon collected around me. I was requested to go to the warehouse and inform those within that those outside had resolved to destroy the press and would not desist until they had accomplished their object; that all would retire until I should return, which request was made by acclamation, and all soon retired to await my return.

I was replied to by those in the warehouse that they had assembled to protect their property from lawless

violence, and that they were determined to do so. The mob began to again assemble with increased numbers, and with guns and weapons of different kinds. I addressed the multitude and commanded them to desist and disperse, to which they listened attentively and respectfully, but to no purpose. A rush was now made to the warehouse with the cry "fire the house," "burn them out," etc. The firing soon became fearful and dangerous between the contending parties—so much so that the further interposition of the civil authorities was believed inadequate and hazardous in the extreme—no means were at my control, or that of any officer present, by which the mob could be dispersed and the loss of life and the shedding of blood prevented. Scenes of the most daring recklessness and infuriated madness followed in quick succession. The building was surrounded and the inmates threatened with extermination and death in the most frightful form imaginable. Every means of escape by flight was cut off. The scene now became one of most appalling and heartrending interest. Fifteen or twenty citizens, among whom were some of our most worthy and enterprising, were apparently doomed to an unenviable and inevitable death if the flames continued. About the time the fire was communicated to the warehouse, Rev. E. P. Lovejoy, late editor of the Observer, received four balls in the breast, near the door of the warehouse, and fell a corpse in a few seconds. Two others from the warehouse were severely wounded. Several persons engaged in the attack were severely wounded, the wounds, however, are not considered dangerous. The contest had been raging for an hour, or more, when the persons in the warehouse (the exact manner it was done I have not been able to ascertain), intimated that they would abandon the house and the press provided they were allowed to depart unmolested. The doors were soon thrown open and those within retreated down Front street. Several guns were fired upon them while retreating and one individual

had a narrow escape—a ball passing through his coat near the shoulder. A large number of persons now rushed into the warehouse, threw the press upon the wharf where it was broken in pieces and thrown into the river. The fire in the roof of the building was extinguished by a spectator, who deserves great praise for his courageous interference, and but little damage was done by it to the building. No disposition seemed to have been manifested to destroy any other property in the warehouse. Without further attempts at violence the mob now dispersed and no further indications of disorder or violence have been manifested.

The foregoing is stated on what I consider undoubted authority, and mostly from my own personal knowledge.

JOHN M. KRUM, Mayor.

The above appears to be a full and fairly unbiased account of the riot and is important as being an official record. The main thing lacking seems to be the manner of Lovejoy's death. That was in this wise: The mob had placed a ladder against a blind wall of the building which a man ascended and set fire to the roof. Those in the building could not get at him and Capt. Enoch Long called for volunteers to step outside and shoot the man on the ladder who was firing the roof. Lovejoy, A. B. Roff and Royal Weller responded and, stepping out of the door one or more fired at the man on the ladder but missed him. The next minute a volley was poured into them from men concealed behind a lumber pile on the wharf. Lovejoy was killed and both Roff and Weller wounded.